

# ZIONIST CLASSICS

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## GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF PINSKER'S "AUTO-EMANCIPATION"

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After the publication of the "Auto-Emancipation", Pinsker, on his way from Russia to Italy, went to see the famous Jewish scholar and preacher, Dr. Adolf Jellinek in Vienna, in order to give him his pamphlet to read and ask his opinion. Jellinek had been an intimate friend of Pinsker's father and welcomed the visitor with great cordiality. But after having read the doctor's pamphlet, he was shocked. The dialogue between the two is historic.

Jellinek: "I thought it was a kind of joke; but it isn't. It is silly for a highly educated man, for a son of Simha Pinsker."

Pinsker : "I don't see any other solution."

Jellinek: "But progress, civilization! Russia cannot remain forever as reactionary as it is!"

Pinsker : "That would not help!"

Jellinek: "You are feverish. You need a medicine - and I would promptly administer you one if I were a physician."

Pinsker : "Am I not a physician myself? I am suffering indeed; but not of any mental disturbance. I have been thinking for years about this problem. There is no other solution."

Jellinek: "God Almighty, Doctor Pinsker! If you are as sick as all that you'd better see one of your colleagues in Vienna."

(From Nahum Sokolow's "Hibath Zion.")

WITH AN EVALUATION BY HAYIM GREENBERG



## GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF PINSKER'S "AUTO-EMANCIPATION"

FOR A THOROUGH ACQUAINTANCE with the postulates of Zionism and for an understanding of the development of Zionist thought and deed, we may resort to two sources:

- 1) Contemporary Jewish life -- with its manifold troubles, struggles and aspirations as it is mirrored in the Jewish press, and,
- 2) the classical works of Zionist thinkers and men of action.

The proper place for the study of contemporary Jewish life is the weekly club meeting -- where it may be presented systematically or sporadically, and where it may appear vivid or dull, heroic or brutal, as the events of the current week paint it.

The proper place for the study of Zionist classics is the Seminar, the study circle of the Young Poale Zion or the Labor Zionist School.

FORTUNATELY, MANY OF THE CLASSIC writings of Zionism are easily understandable, easily available, and are not voluminous. Thus, for example, Pinsker's "Auto-Emancipation" which constitutes the subject of our present study is a 32-page pamphlet which can be read in less than an hour.

THE METHODS WE PROPOSE for this study are simple and can be followed without any difficulty. Two sessions lasting for about an hour and a half each will suffice.

### First Session:

- a) Brief Introductory Survey. A bird's eye view of the development of Zionist thought up to Pinsker.
- b) Reading of "Auto-Emancipation" (p.p.4-20) by a member of the group.
- c) Questions and discussion.

### Second Session:

- a) Reading of "Auto-Emancipation" (p.p.20-32).
- b) Questions and discussion.

IMPORTANT: Every member in the study circle, seminar, or school must possess a copy of this work. The text used has been published by Masada (1935) and is available through the Young Poale Zion office at 15¢ per copy.

## FIRST SESSION

Objective: To determine and analyze the constituent elements which make up and constitute the Jewish problem.

### A. Survey briefly the forerunners of Zionism up to Pinsker.

- Bibliography: 1) Graetz: "Popular History of the Jews", Jordan Publishing Co., N.Y. 1935. Supplementary volume VI by Max Raisin - Chapter VI - "Palestine, The Nationalist Revival and the Zionist Hope" - p.p. 355-376.  
 2) Jessie Sampter: "Modern Palestine", Hadassah, N.Y. 1933. "Forerunners of Zionism" by Lotta Lewisoohn - p.p. 20-27.  
 3) Nahum Sokolow: "Hibbath Zion", Jerusalem, 1935. p.p. 1-176 (read chapters dealing directly with forerunners).

### B. Read the Text: p.p. 4-20.

### C. Questions and Discussions:

- 1) What significance, if any, do you attribute to the title "Auto-Emancipation"?
- 2) Distinguish the movements in Jewish life for emancipation and those for "auto-emancipation".
- 3) What is Pinsker's underlying motive, if any, in prefacing his work with Hillel's "If I am not for myself, who will be for me, and if not now, when?"
- 4) In your opinion, does Pinsker consider the Jewish problem a modern phenomenon or a chronic Galut problem? Give references to support your view.
- 5) In all countries where Jews reside they constitute a minority. But then there are other minorities which live among foreign nations. Wherein does the position of the Jewish minority differ from the others?
- 6) Fear, Judeo-phobia, Anti-semitism -- these concepts are treated by Pinsker chiefly from a biological-psychological point of view. Do you approve of this approach? Or do you attribute this phenomenon to economic, cultural, and political reasons? Which factors would you particularly ascribe to present-day German, Polish, and American anti-semitism?
- 7) Where has modern emancipation failed? How has it affected the individual Jew and the collective?
- 8) "Having analyzed Judeophobia as an hereditary form of demonopathy, peculiar to the human race, and having represented anti-semitism as based upon an inherited aberration of the human mind, we must draw the important conclusion, that we must give up contending against these hostile impulses, just as we give up contending against every other inherited predisposition." Do you agree with this view? What effect if any will the creation of a Jewish homeland have on this "inherited predisposition?"
- 9) Wherein are Jews "more" to blame for this "Jewish Question?" Is the lack of self-respect of the individual Jew or the collective responsible for our anomaly?
- 10) How has the belief in the "Mission of the Jew" affected the struggle for national rehabilitation?

## SECOND SESSION

Objective: To find a solution, not a palliative,  
for the Jewish problem.

A. Read the text -- p.p. 20-32..

B. Questions and Discussion:

- 1) What is the solution which Pinsker proposes? What forces operating in Jewish life does he exploit in order to achieve this goal?
- 2) Describe his territorialist views. What place does he ascribe to Palestine?
- 3) "This would aim chiefly and especially at creating a secure and inviolable home for the surplus of those Jews who live as proletarians in the different countries and are a burden to the native citizens.....We must occupy ourselves with the foundation of such a lasting refuge, not with the purposeless collection of donations for pilgrims or fugitives who forsake, in their consternation, a hospitable home, to perish in the abyss of a strange and unknown land." If Pinsker's view is correct what would Zionism offer to the American Jew? Does this view coincide with the modern theory of Zionism? How does Socialist Zionism view this?
- 4) What organizational instruments does Pinsker propose? Compare them with the present Zionist agencies.
- 5) From the following bibliography:
  - a) Nahum Sokolow: "History of Zionism" London, 1918
  - b) Nahum Sokolow: "Hibbath Zion", Jerusalem, 1935
  - c) Ahad Ha'am: "Pinsker and Political Zionism" in Leon Simon's collection "Zionism and Judaism".
  - d) Pinsker's address at the Kattowitz Conference of the Chevevei Zion printed herewith,
 indicate the change which Pinsker's view underwent as regards
  - a) the economic factor in Jewish life
  - b) Palestine as a Homeland.
- 6) Evaluate Pinsker's "Auto-Emancipation" in the light of the present time. Why is "Auto-Emancipation" considered a classic? (Compare with Hayim Greenberg's evaluation, p.p. 7 ).

# OUR FUTURE—LEON PINSKER

FROM HIS OPENING ADDRESS AT THE KATTOVITZ CONVENTION OF CHOVEVIE-ZION

ALLOW ME to clarify our point of view in a few words. The Jews are crowded in the countries in which they live. The large masses, and the great distress which is caused by the social position of these masses have strengthened us in the recognition that only if a new way and a new field of work would open for our nation, could this condition change to our advantage. One cannot deny the fact that during the thousands of years of the Galuth the Jews forgot agriculture; as strangers and aliens they were forced to forget it. The blame for this cannot be placed definitely on any one circumstance. However, one cannot disregard this fact. In it is wrapped up an important, perhaps the most important, moment which has disturbed the development of our spiritual and material life, and which has helped in a great measure to injure the Jews in the eyes of other nations.

THE JEWS were, for a long time, mainly a trading nation. That which is entirely normal in connection with other nations does not always remain so in connection with the Jews. Other nations when they live in a land have to till the soil. They create, in the simple sense of that word. By means of this creation which is not middle class, another creation, that of commerce, professions, science and art becomes justified. Both of these are necessary for wholeness. And therefore, the development of the spiritual and material talents in a like measure, becomes more or less normal; for commerce and professions are justifiable divisions of the activities and functions which each and every nation conducts. But to our misfortune one cannot say the same is true in reference to the Jews. Separated from the tilling of the soil, unintentionally, agriculture became far from Jewish hearts. And therefore all our doings were in a certain degree, one-sided, and at times, this hindered our physical development.

AT FIRST, when communication among nations was inexpert, and the inhabitants of the country lived in villages for the most part, the Jews were the middle men, and took the place of the steam-engine and the telegraph. Jews lived mostly in the cities, and the majority of their work was centered in commerce. Now conditions have changed. With the increase of city-dwellers, with the great strides in commerce in the new countries, the Jewish population in cities has grown even more urbanized. And this has precipitated conflicts between the Jews and the masses. A little of the vulgar expression of these conflicts we can see in Anti-semitism.

TRULY, THE WORK OF THE JEWS in commerce was, in the eyes of the nations which persecuted us, work to which we had no right and which for the most part we misused. From this point of view and also in order to regain our balance, it is necessary to return to the masses of our people. There is degeneration in petty trades. We must return to crafts, to the ancient, natural occupation of our fathers, agriculture. The earth gives herself willingly for the exploitation of her strength. And she is also more grateful than human beings, each of whom allows himself to exploit his comrade, but does not permit his comrade (particularly a Jew) to exploit him. And truly we, Jews, have fallen so low that the means of our existence is already regarded merely as exploitation by all nations.

HOW MUCH MORE is it our duty to learn to understand the signs of the time, which are riddles, and to make use of them for our revival and also for our organized adaption to general conditions. The reversion to natural laws will seem to us a duty and a necessity, if we pay attention to the big revolution, in the outlook of nations or political economy and society, which has come into existence in recent years. Should we leave the question unsolved, justifiably or no, a war marking the death on wealth will come about. And it is clear that the Jews will be the first sacrifice (perhaps the only ones) of this revolution, which is about to come upon us like a calamity, as we already have been a sacrifice in a small measure, while its approach is merely impending and still distant.

IT IS FOR US to climb out of our choking distress into the open world, and to find for ourselves a new field of work. If until now, we were the carriers of the middlemen's service from man to man, let us now return to our mother, nature, who blesses, with her gratitude, the hands of her tillers and knows not any difference between man and man, save that of diligence. Even as we have passed before, from the plow to the scales, let us now take courage to return to our brethren, with the plow.

WE CAN TRUST more in the diligence and flexibility of our people, than in the slash of the whip of anti-semitism. For after we, ourselves, shall recognize the good in us, there will be found the strength in us to return to heavy work to which we are unaccustomed. Our nation, if wise, will find it not difficult to recognize and to realize that a hurried wandering without a program will not bring us to our goal.

NOT WITH THE WAVE OF A HAND does the mode of life of a people change. Therefore, how much do we deceive ourselves, if we hope yet in our life time to pluck the fruit of our efforts? And truly, what are a few generations in the life of an eternal people? With the necessary diligence and care the nation will hasten to change the old ways of living for newer ones.

## "AUTO-EMANCIPATION" BY HAYIM GREENBERG 7/3-36

IT IS FIFTY YEARS since Leon Pinsker first published his pamphlet "Auto-Emancipation". The term pamphlet is employed here only in the typographical sense, for in the sixteen or eighteen pages of this work, originally written in German, Pinsker made in a concentrated monumental form the most courageous analysis of Jewish reality ever made in Zionist literature. Far removed from the eschatological and -- and in a certain sense -- the "Chosen People" doctrine of Moses Hess; free from that sentimentalism commonly found in the writings of the early "Lovers of Zion"; unlike the naively realistic utopianism to which the genius of Herzl gave play in his "Judenstaat" -- Pinsker approached the problems of the Jew and Judaism with the responsibility of a surgeon who is little concerned with the symptoms of the disease but who aims at reaching the very source of the wound with his scalpel. None of the Zionist thinkers and writers succeeded in evolving in but a few plastic sentences and aphorisms -- which are at the same time as cold and as exact as a mathematical formula, and yet full of vision and of poetical ecstasy -- as thorough a characterization of the Jewish tragedy as did Pinsker in his "Auto-Emancipation".

WITH A SINGLE intuitive stroke of his daring pen he embraced the entire Jewish past and saw the tragic Ahasuerus picture of a people with too much vitality to be destroyed, yet deformed beyond an ability to experience a full-blooded and dignified life. He analysed the mysterious and paradoxical relationships between the Jews and non-Jews and the hopeless dualism of each. On the one hand, the ruling nations wish to absorb the Jewish people completely, but at the same time they are frightened by the very thought that such a strange and "inferior" people shall become part of their flesh. On the other hand, the Jews are feverishly intoxicated with a desire to become assimilated, but they become terror-stricken as soon as they face the abyss of destruction.

NEITHER GENUINE LIFE nor natural death, neither decay through assimilation nor national suicide -- all roads are blocked. The Jew lives in spite of himself. Life is inescapable, existence is a commandment of fate. Jewry is doomed to remain on the historic arena. It cannot escape this fate. This scar cannot be removed from the forehead. For the Jew to preach suicide, to parade with his own death certificate is in reality to proclaim his continued existence. What is the way out? How can we remove the curses of being? How can we nullify the decree of living? The decree cannot be nullified -- the curse cannot be removed -- it can only be elevated and sublimated. It can only be transformed into a blessing, provided Ahasuerus is ready to revolt, pro-

vided the living ghost is ready to assert his powerful urge to live, provided he is willing to rekindle the Promethean flame within him.

SUCH SUBLIMATION of the Jewish fate, such dignified and heroic affirmation is the real and lasting content of Pinsker's "Auto-Emancipation". To Pinsker, therefore, the building of a Jewish land is neither a plan nor a venture, nor a "Means to Remedy Jewish Ills", but the awakening of the self-respect and self-esteem of the Jewish collective. The Jew must gratefully accept his fate and follow it along the best and most dignified path. Our destiny is one -- life: the means of realizing it are many. Until now, the course of the Jew has been determined by circumstances, by mere chance, and by the dictates of outside agents -- foreign rulers; henceforth the Jew alone must determine his course. He alone must bring about his freedom.

MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY has passed since Pinsker brought this message. Now, even more than before, do we appreciate the validity and force of his frank analysis. Even now, we are affected by the prophetic pathos and the stimulating aroma of this classic.

PINSKER DID NOT LIVE TO SEE the beginning of our "self-emancipation". Decades have passed and we are still far from the shores of redemption. And yet, if Pinsker were alive today he would change neither his diagnosis nor his prognosis. The tragic period which followed his death has only produced added proof of the truth contained in "Auto-Emancipation". The impossibility of national death and the helpless shame of gradual national suicide is now sensed even by the less penetrating minds in the lands of "classical" Jewish assimilation. If during his lifetime Pinsker were ever pursued by a shadow of a doubt as to the validity of his analysis, this shadow would now totally fade away. His diagnosis has been verified.

BUT WHAT OF HIS CURE, of the positive road he proposed? Pinsker was no calculator. The course of the rehabilitation of a people cannot be charted with mathematical certainty. We have far to go before we reach our goal. The road is long and full of thorns. But what, after all, is a long road? A road is long only when there is another one which is shorter. When there is but one road it is neither long nor short. Such is the road which Pinsker saw.

He saw it and pointed it out to us.

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